50th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
1973

WRL NEWS

Published by War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10012, U.S. branch of the War Resisters Intl., a pacifist organization with affiliates in 20 countries and individuals in more than 80 countries. Staff—Ralph DiGia, David McReynolds, Lynne Shatzkin Coffin, Editor—Jim Peck. Printed by the Grindstone Press, a Movement print shop. No. 178

INDIANS CALENDAR

The dramatic protest action last winter at Wounded Knee prompted us to select the American Indians—the most ripped-off of all Americans—as the topic for the 1974 Peace Calendar. Dolores McAuliffe is the editor; Julie Maas did the artwork; Nicholas Nappi designed the cover and Dick Gregory wrote the forward.

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50th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

by Wendy Schwartz

Photo by Gracie Hedemann

I arrived at Asilomar an hour late and found the hall in darkness for Larry Gara's slide show on the movement's history. When the lights went on, I could see that there were over 500 persons in attendance. Like the League's total membership, these assembled persons represented every segment of the pacifist movement, every age group, every life style. And despite the harsh light of the meeting hall, each individual struck me as a beautiful person.

(continued next page)

COs OF THREE WARS

EVAN THOMAS

Photo by David McReynolds

When, at the opening session of WRL's 50th anniversary conference, Igal Roodenko asked World War I COs to rise, Evan Thomas and Ned Richards were the only ones. The call for World War II COs to rise received a somewhat larger response—Larry Gara, Ralph DiGia, Henry Geiger, Roy Kepler, Jim Peck, George Reeves, Denny Wilcher, Igal himself, who was already standing, and maybe one or two others.

Then Igal concluded: "I'm not going to ask Vietnam War resisters to rise, because everybody in the hall would have to get up."

LARRY GARA

Photo by David McReynolds

ROY KEPLER (AND DAUGHTER)

Photo by Charles McReynolds

50th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE (continued)

Larry Gara's expertly-coordinated slide show made a dramatic introduction to a 50th anniversary conference. He had spent the last few years collecting historical information and photos of movement people. His slides are the ones you'd want flashed on your wall when you feel depressed about the general performance of the peace movement over the years.

Here in Asilomar, in August 1973, we were, I believe, the largest number of pacifists ever to assemble for a conference in the United States. While we were certainly glad to see each other—all of us—it was hard not to feel a bit overwhelmed by so large a group. (WRL conferences of a hundred people were still fresh memories for many of us.) Though there was no way to meet everyone, and only enough time to talk with a few in depth, the disappointment was mitigated by the realization that all these folks are home every day organizing for peace. But I wish we could have found out where home is.

The general sessions did get a bit unwieldy with so large a group, and even though the vibes were the best, the speaker-audience relationship succeeded in at least partially infringing on our comradeship. Also, many folks had good things to say, but there was just no way for us to listen to over five hundred comments, and still have time for other business.

We experimented this year with relying on our own resource people, instead of inviting outside speakers. It went very well, I think, because WRL folks are filled with good ideas, and have many interesting experiences to relate. What became evident, too, as a result of the reports and discussions we heard, is that our imaginations and energies are boundless, and we must establish better channels of communication in order to make use of each other's resources and talents.

The most important session was the one that dealt with WRL's future role. Roy Kepler began the discussion with his opening night remarks, and it continued the next morning in a panel discussion. Roy stressed the League's commitment to Gandhian action, and urged that we continue to create programs that will convince people of the value of direct action and civil disobedience. Beverly Woodward focused on WRL's relation to the transnational movement, saying that revolution is possible through a unified world program of nonviolent action and strategy. David McReynolds, the resident Marxist, discussed the relationship between pacifism and socialism, and stressed that it is necessary to look beyond our immediate community of radicals for support—go to your neighborhood bar, he said, and start communicating there.

Lee Swenson, of the Institute for the Study of Nonviolence, held up the anarchist position, asserting that implementation of Gandhi's theories of decentralism will create a superior social order. He also spoke about the hazards of living in an overly technological society, and argued eloquently for the abolition of the automobile. And Ira Sandperl—oh, Ira—brought it all back home as he reminded us of our dedication to pacifism, to truth, and to love. He spoke of our fears, and our reluctance to be up front about what we believe, and then said that we have the right to be right.

There were several workshop sessions so folks could meet informally in small groups and discuss a variety of subjects. It was here that we picked our brains for new kinds of actions and programs. The workshop topics ran the full range of radical activity and theory—from amnesty and political prisoners to gay awareness and living the simple life. The most well-attended workshop was the one run by Dan Ellsberg. He spoke with great emotion of his own recent experiences, including the Pentagon Papers trial, and of his commitment to the peace movement. His revelations were difficult, and probably painful, to make, but they were uniquely inspiring to his listeners. (A transcription of Dan's presentation will appear in an upcoming issue of **WIN** Magazine.)

(continued page five)

PUTTING WORDS INTO ACTION

by Jim Peck

At the end of the WRL conference at Asilomar some 65 of those attending boarded 16 cars for a motorcade to Fresno to nonviolently challenge, on August 8, an anti-mass-picketing injunction against the United Farm Workers. Among our group were Evan Thomas, 82-year old WRL veteran, Joan Baez, who would bring her songs to the picket lines and Daniel Ellsberg, hounded by the media since becoming Nixon's number one "enemy."

Shortly after we started picketing one of the big ranches, a newsman chided Ellsberg with: "What happens to be *your* connection with the striking farm workers?" He aptly replied: "The Pentagon Papers involved the issue of free speech. So does the farm workers' mass picketing. Furthermore, I have admired Cesar Chavez for some time and I am here today to give him my support."

It was a burning-hot day—like every day in that area—once the sun finishes rising. We had been picketing since long before sunrise, having gathered at the assembly point at 4:30 a.m. None of us knew whether or not we would be busted for our civil disobedience to the injunction. Some 450 persons were in jail, including Dorothy Day, who had come west to attend our conference. There had been no arrests in the two preceding days, but nobody knew when the arrest policy might be resumed. By mid-morning it became apparent that the sheriff, who was on the scene along with about eight deputies, would not renew the arrest policy that day. Possibly, the authorities feared the potential publicity of Daniel Ellsberg, Joan Baez and some 200 pickets joining the 450 already in jail. Possibly they took into consideration the fact that the injunction case was in the process of being argued in court.

ELLSBERG SPEAKS

Photo by Edward Nolde (Fresno BEE)

BAEZ SINGS

Photo by Edward Nolde (Fresno BEE)

I have been on many picket lines in my life, but this was my first in the vast California corporate farm area. I have on occasion been on picket lines which start early, but never before at 5 a.m., when we started circling along the road bordering a ranch associated with Barr Packing Co., one of the biggest.

Ordinarily, the only contact between pickets and strikebreakers occurs when the latter enter or leave a struck plant. With the farm workers, pickets are in constant communication with strikebreakers who work not too far from the road to be out-of-hearing of the portable loudspeakers. Frequently, strikebreakers heed the pleas over the loudspeakers and decide to join the strike. Throughout our morning of picketing, our loudspeakers were in use. Ellsberg's talk was duly translated into Spanish and Baez's music needs no translation.

(continued next page)

PUTTING WORDS INTO ACTION (continued)

Union spokesmen and spokeswomen who talked over the loudspeakers emphasized the principle of nonviolence, as advocated by Cesar Chavez. The talks were so un-hostile that at one point a dialogue was established between representatives of the union and a deputation representing the growers, who were gathered around an American flag a few yards inside the property.

At about noon, we boarded the cars and AFSC bus parked along the other side of the road and drove in to Fresno for a second mass vigil at the courthouse, where both the injunction case and the case for releasing the 450 pickets on recognizance was being argued. (The pickets, including Dorothy Day, subsequently were released and are back on the picket lines.) We had vigiled there the previous day, immediately upon arrival from Asilomar. As on that day, the vigil concluded with a mass rally in the park in front of the courthouse.

A few of our group stayed on to picket with the farm workers. Some departed to return to their home towns. Others, including Marty Jezer and I, got rides up to the Bay area in order to participate the following day in a Nagasaki Day demonstration organized by Craig Simpson of WRL-Southwest in conjunction with the conference.

PICKET AT FRENCH CONSULATE

The effectiveness of his organizing was proved when up to 70 persons showed up on the morning of August 9 to picket the French Consulate in San Francisco protesting the French nuclear tests in the Pacific. During the demonstration, a deputation of four, including myself, conferred in French with the consul. The demonstration was well covered by the media. The cool weather was a sharp contrast with Fresno the two previous days.

Photo by Gracie Hedemann

VIGIL AT A.E.C.

Photo by Gracie Hedemann

In the afternoon we got rides out to Livermore to demonstrate at the big Atomic Energy Commission lab there. We arrived in time to leaflet the homebound employees as they crossed the road to the extensive parking lots.

LYNNE COFFIN (AND CHAPTER REPS.)

Photo by David McReynolds

50th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE (continued)

Representatives from various WRL locals reported on their recent activities and latest plans in a session chaired by Lynne Coffin of the National Office. Kent Smith of WRL-West spoke of efforts to branch out from the Bay area to other parts of California, especially to Los Angeles where there has been no WRL local for some time. He also discussed alternative structures that have been set up locally, such as a people's auto repair shop, which are owned and run cooperatively and offer a present-day alternative to capitalism. Margie Rece, from Augusta, discussed the special problems Southern organizers face, particularly lack of financial support, but she also reported that there is an active group in her community.

Bob Mayer, coordinator of the Plains States WRL, was optimistic about our newest regional office, and is currently organizing a tour of the area for Igal. Ed Hedemann of Austin WRL reported plans to expand organizing to cover all of Texas, in light of strong local support. And Craig Simpson discussed the situation in Albuquerque, which has been marked by staff changes recently, and a subsequent reorganization period. And then, almost as an afterthought, in a way that only Craig can master, he said that their combination home/office had been destroyed by fire the week before. (Obviously, WRL-Southwest could use an extra contribution now.) But in spite of this last report, all that we heard was encouraging, and the enthusiasm of the organizers is bound to be contagious.

The joy and unity that somehow seems to characterize the West Coast more than any other region played a significant role in the Conference's success. The basic organizational work, both before and during the Conference, was so thorough the usual snafus that have come to be a tradition at conferences were all but eliminated. A special thanks, then, to Mandy Carter and all the other WRL-West folks for making sure that we got beds and dinner, a hall to meet in, and no rain.

MANDY CARTER

Photo by Gracie Hedemann

And, of course, no get-together with West Coast people would be complete without plenty of good music, and for this we had Joan Baez and Mimi Farina. They prepared a mini-concert for us, in addition to some impromptu singing at other times, performing individually and together, and leading the group in some sing-alongs. Five hundred and fifty people with linked arms singing "Amazing Grace" was a proper climax to the Conference.

The National Committee met for a day after the Conference ended. Much of the meeting time was devoted to program and local organizing. We set up a new funding procedure that will provide for increased regional outreach work and which creates guidelines for handling future funding requests. We also plan to intensify fund raising efforts on the local level, using the resources of movement people who specialize in this work. And we will make a special effort to improve communication between local, regional, and national office.

The League will continue work on its current programs—amnesty, political prisoners in South Vietnam, ending Portugal's U.S.-financed African war—and will begin to deal more specifically with the problems in the Middle East and Latin America, and build an anti-recruitment program.

REGISTRATION

Photo by Bob Fitch

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Photo by Gracie Hedemann

FIRST SESSION

Photo by Gracie Hedemann

YOUNGER GENERATION

Photo by Gracie Hedemann

OCTOBER 5 . . .

. . . is Portugal's national holiday. This year it will be observed with demonstrations at Portuguese consulates demanding an end to Portugal's U.S.-financed war in Africa, which already is of longer duration than the war in Vietnam. These demonstrations will be a kickoff in our campaign to pierce the almost total news blackout regarding this war.

The New York demonstration will take place at *noon* at the building which houses both the consulate and the Portuguese Mission to the UN– *630 Fifth Avenue (opposite St. Patrick's Cathedral).*

The San Francisco demonstration will take place at *noon* at the consulate, *3298 Washington Street.*

IRS THREATENS TO SEIZE $6,000

Last July WRL received "Final Notice Before Seizure" for $1,300 and in August for $4,700, making a total of $6,000. The Government demands this amount for income taxes the WRL failed to withhold from employees for the years 1969, 1970 and 1971 with a 100% penalty added.

It has been the policy of the WRL to not withhold taxes of an employee taking a tax resistance position. At present, WRL is in touch with attorneys and is asking IRS for a detailed account of how it arrived at its figure of $6,000. Meanwhile, a committee has been set up to plan strategy for protests and demonstrations around this issue of war taxes.

ENROLLMENT BLANK

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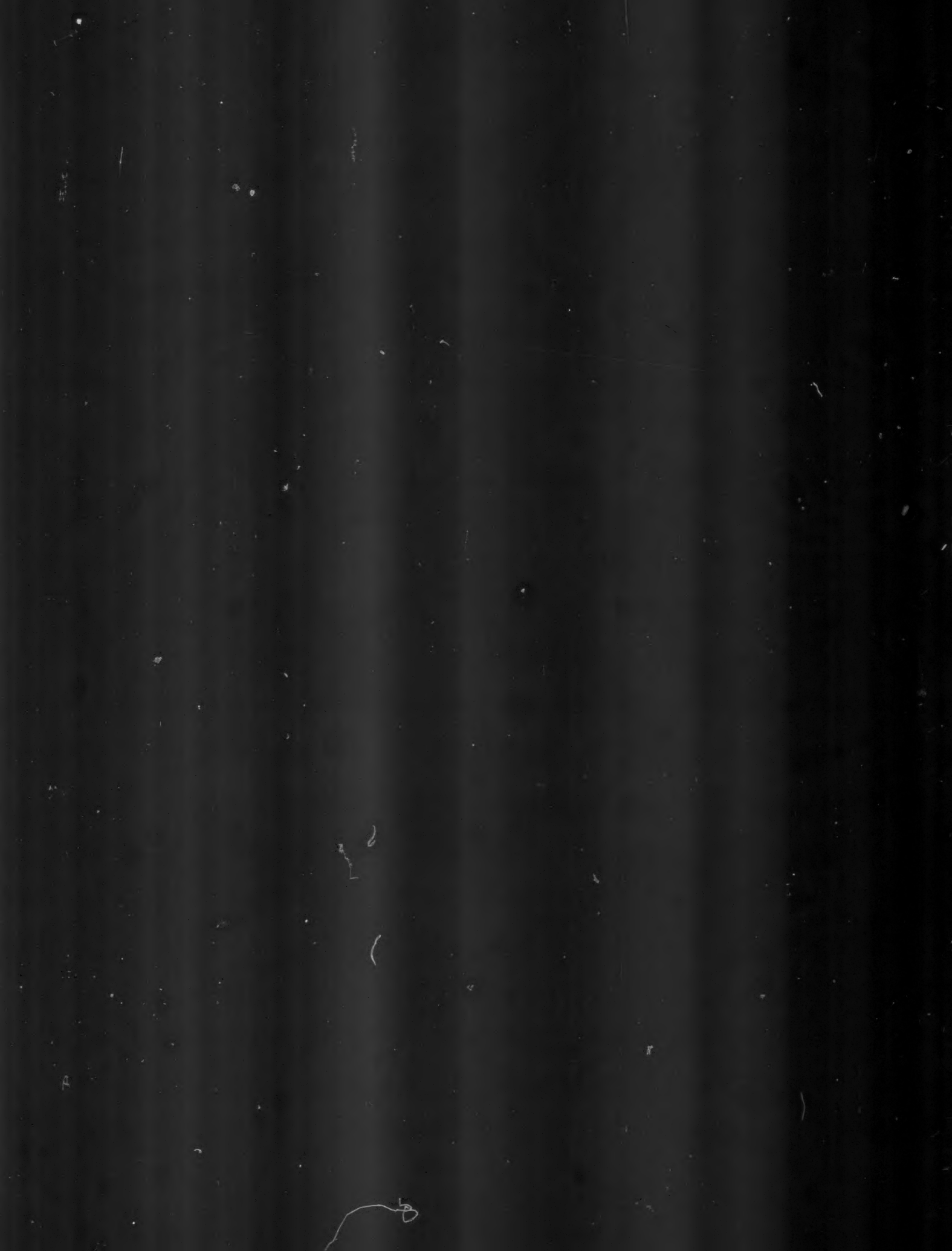
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